

VZCZCXRO4307  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHHM RUEHJO  
DE RUEHMO #2539 2801309  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 071309Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5020  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHXI/LABOR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHXD/MOSCOW POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002539

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/RUS, DRL, OES/IHB  
DOL FOR BRUMFIELD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/06/2019

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ECON](#) [EIND](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: WORKER SAFETY PROGRAM SHIFTS FROM REACTION TO  
PREVENTION

Classified By: EconMinCouns Matthias J. Mitman, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (SBU) Recent GOR statistics show modest progress in ensuring worker safety but also underscore the need for continued improvement. In 2008, over 50 percent of Russian workers labored in conditions that were dangerous to their health, according to a report on worker safety published by the Ministry of Health and Social Development (MOHSD). Documented violations include cases in which workers wore little protective equipment, enterprises stored hazardous materials in open areas, emergency exits were locked, and employers permitted smoking near flammable substances. Safety standard violations, unsatisfactory organization of work activities, and insufficient safety training for workers caused over 70 percent of work-related accidents. According to MOHSD survey results, employers were generally uninterested in improving working conditions and safety.

¶2. (SBU) Within the framework of its demographic policy through 2025, MOHSD is implementing a two-year program at the federal and regional levels to protect workers' health and improve safety standards by introducing a system of risk management into the workplace. MOHSD is creating a system to evaluate and control risks to workers' health, which will include social partnerships with employers and workers to divide responsibilities for protecting workers' health as well as a nationwide, computerized network to monitor safety conditions. The program also provides training on health issues and safety requirements funded by the Social Insurance Fund for specific categories of at-risk workers. In addition, the government plans to introduce changes to the labor, criminal, and administrative violation codes to formalize risk management procedures and strengthen employers' responsibility for violations of worker safety laws. As a result of the program, MOHSD expects to lower the number of work-related fatalities from 4,582 in 2007 to 3,900 in 2010, decrease the number of injuries from approximately 85,000 to 75,000, and reduce the share of industrial enterprises with unsatisfactory labor conditions from around 60 percent to 53 percent.

¶3. (C) Sten Petersen, Workers' Activities Senior Specialist at the International Labor Organization (ILO) Moscow office, positively assessed the shift to risk management in MOHSD's approach to worker safety during a recent meeting. The ILO has worked extensively with MOHSD to develop the current program and conduct training of trainers for regional labor inspectors on workplace risk-management issues. According to Petersen, MOHSD is realigning its objective from a reduction in the number of work-related accidents to an overall decrease in the number of unsafe workplaces conducive to such accidents. Petersen asserted that MOHSD's program and new,

prevention-based approach were likely to succeed because the government already had the necessary resources in place; the issue was simply using them more effectively. In addition, Petersen noted that unions, which in the past occasionally failed to object to unsafe working conditions because their members received hazard pay in compensation, supported the new worker safety initiative.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

14. (C) MOHSD's worker safety program represents a significant step on the part of the GOR toward changing a workplace culture that is often woefully inattentive to the health and safety of Russian workers. The problems to be addressed are still large in scale, as evidenced by the goal of reducing industrial workplaces with unsafe working conditions to 53 percent. Yet, past successes in the hydrocarbon and paper sectors, many directly the result of U.S. and international firms' investment in Russia, attest to the potential for improvement. MOHSD's emphasis on worker safety also presents a potential area for increased bilateral cooperation on health issues within the framework of the new Bilateral Presidential Commission. End Comment.  
Beyrle